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*Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of
LD 2074, An Act to Update the Requirements for Social Worker Licensure
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services*

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Lori K. Gramlich. I proudly represent House District 131, which is the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach. I also serve as Assistant House Majority Leader, and I am a Licensed Master Social Worker. I am pleased to submit testimony in strong support of LD 2074, An Act to Update the Requirements for Social Worker Licensure.

I write to you with nearly 40 years of experience in the social work profession. Over the course of my career, I have served as Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Maine Chapter, and as Field Coordinator for the University of Southern Maine Department of Social Work. Throughout these roles, I have worked closely with students, early-career professionals, seasoned practitioners, educators, employers and regulators. I have seen firsthand how licensure policy directly affects access to care, workforce stability and public protection.

This legislation represents a thoughtful, balanced and long-overdue modernization of Maine's social work licensure statutes.

First and foremost, this bill maintains strong public protections while removing unnecessary barriers that do not improve safety or quality of care. The bill preserves core requirements related to education, ethics, examination, consultation and demonstrated competence. At the same time, it addresses administrative and structural obstacles that have made it harder for qualified individuals to enter, re-enter or remain in the social work workforce—particularly at a time when Maine faces serious workforce shortages across health and human services.

The clarification of conditional licensure categories—including licensed social worker-conditional and licensed master social worker-conditional clinical—reflects how professional development actually occurs in practice. Social workers are trained through a combination of formal education, supervised experience and consultation. Allowing individuals who have met educational and

examination requirements to practice under appropriate consultation while completing required hours aligns Maine with best practices nationally while supporting safe, supervised service delivery rather than delaying entry into the workforce.

The bill also appropriately expands the authority of the State Board of Social Worker Licensure to consider substantially equivalent consultation and work experience gained in Maine or other jurisdictions. As someone who has worked with social workers moving into Maine, returning to practice after caregiving or military service, or re-establishing licensure after life transitions, I can say with confidence that the current system has too often functioned as a barrier rather than a safeguard. This legislation restores professional judgment to the Board while keeping public protection at the forefront.

Additionally, streamlining consultation requirements and eliminating the two-tiered system that treated Department of Health and Human Services employees differently from other social workers is both equitable and practical. Social workers provide critical services in a wide range of settings—schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities, community agencies and state programs—and consistent licensure standards promote clarity, fairness and mobility across systems.

Importantly, this bill supports workforce sustainability without lowering standards. It recognizes the realities of today's social work profession, including interdisciplinary consultation, diverse practice settings and the need for flexibility while maintaining accountability. By reducing unnecessary delays in licensure, the bill helps ensure that Maine people can access timely social services, behavioral health supports and care coordination—especially in rural and underserved communities.

I urge the Committee to support this legislation. It reflects careful collaboration, respect for professional standards and a clear understanding of Maine's workforce needs. Most importantly, it strengthens our ability to protect the health, safety and well-being of the people of this state by ensuring a qualified, ethical and accessible social work workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to join you for the work session to answer any questions you may have.